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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development: priority theme: initiation of the overall review of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit

Statement submitted by the International Federation of Social Workers, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) was formally established in 1950 and has been involved with broad issues since 1928. IFSW now consists of 85 member associations, representing over 460,000 social workers, in 70 countries. Its common mission links them "to present and promote the point of view of the social work profession to international and national organizations carrying out social planning, social development, social action and welfare programmes" to benefit people.[1]

Social workers have always provided social services to a wide range of people in need. They have developed the standards and educational requirements for sound practice. The profession has studied and researched what contributes to the improvement of human life and to the formation of productive public policies and programmes. Advocacy of these aims is an inherent part of social work activity at all levels.

IFSW supports the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. During this post-Summit period, a commendable flow of written and oral presentations has reflected aspects of social development, as seen by Governments and United Nations bodies and agencies. Special United Nations monitoring units, special rapporteurs, groups in civil society, state of the world reports and reports presented by over 120 countries that have

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ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child have followed up other summit conferences.

The interacting process among non-governmental organizations, Governments and United Nations agencies highlights their disparate and often overlapping goals and interests. At the same time, the wide-scale conditions cripple vast numbers of people, meant to be served by these organizations. Stark evidence suggests that the implementation of the Summit commitments has been lacking in governmental policies that have led to a lessening of help to those in need. Great disparities exist between the haves and have-nots. Problems of exclusion of the latter persist, so that many people, including women, children, people with disabilities, the mentally ill, those of advanced age, indigenous peoples and others, are not only left behind but are set further back by the continuing pressure of unmet needs.

The limitation of resources is often cited as the basis for the failure to make progress in these areas. As the Copenhagen Programme of Action states, "Social development and implementation of the Programme of Action of the Summit are primarily the responsibility of Governments, although international cooperation and assistance are essential for their full implementation".[2]

Governments in their efforts to improve the well-being of vast populations need the continued support and participation of the many sectors of civil society. Accordingly it is helpful in the current meeting of this Commission to address the matter of the basic social services for all. This formulation mirrors the wide diversity of people whose needs must be met.

In order to reach the goal of basic social services for all, IFSW wholly endorses the emphasis on collaborative work by government and non-governmental sectors. Its own specialization and decades of effort in and among varied institutions along with villages and neighbourhoods, has led social workers to sustain small group and individual participation, if at all possible, with these larger units of society.

In the meantime, the basic social services for all concept also requires an expanded view of the range of service providers required to meet the needs of people as a whole, communities, families and individuals. Social work is one of the services that is prepared, experienced and able to join with fellow service providers to achieve basic social services for all.

Social work emphasis on the person or family in a situation enables them to collaborate with Governments and non-governmental groups towards setting up social services. Most social workers interrelate with other service providers within institutions, such as child guidance agencies they founded, hospitals, clinics, schools, religious institutions, residences for the elderly, courts and correctional facilities, housing developments and others.

Within this functional and physical interdependence, social workers often carry responsibility for unifying organizations and implementing joint multifaceted service efforts. This approach is most essential for complex problems.

Therefore, IFSW recommends that each government produce a national framework for social development to prioritize problems. Each overall country report will designate necessary resources and strategies to enable the partnership with those being served. Periodical reassessment and monitoring ought to address major unmet needs. On the whole, collaboration warrants continuing attention to maximize opportunities to solve critical problems.[3] Support for international measures is necessary to combat poverty-creating phenomena, like currency speculation (the Asian crisis).

Providers of all sorts, government or non-government, including grass-roots organizations, must examine Summit objectives to set their own priorities and plans. They need to collaborate within each country and across borders for plans for social development to halt the spread of injustice and to eradicate dehumanizing conditions. May the year 2000 launch a millennium without the catastrophe of war with genocide, and without the military and economic uprooting of millions.

Notes

[1] IFSW Constitution, 1998.

[2] *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 82.

[3] Ibid., para. 83.